DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 426 428 CS 509 962

AUTHOR Peek, Jamitaline L.
TITLE Improving the Language Usage of a Teacher.
PUB DATE 1998-07-00
NOTE 6p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Responsibility; *Administrator Role; Elementary Secondary Education; *Grammar; Grammatical Acceptability; Instructional Leadership; *Language Usage; *Principals; Teacher Administrator Relationship; *Teacher Competencies; *Teacher Improvement

ABSTRACT

This paper outlines the suggested steps to improve the language usage of a teacher about whom a school principal has received complaints from parents concerning her poor grammar. It first suggests that the principal observe the teacher to verify the parents' concerns. The paper then lists 10 ideas for the principal to suggest to help the teacher improve her grammar. (Contains 6 references.) (CR)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

SP

ED 426 428

Improving the Language Usage of a Teacher

by

Jamitaline L. Peek

Course: Supervision and Administration of a Reading Program
Sponsor: DeKalb County School System
Instructor: Dr. Bill Hammond
Date: Summer 1998

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
J. Peek
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Statement of the Problem

The principal has asked your assistance in improving the language usage of a teacher. She uses poor grammar with students and parents have complained about frequent mistakes in information sent home. Devise a personal plan of development.

Resolutions

Note: Prior to making recommendations for any of the following, the principal must first observe the teacher to verify the parents' concerns. In this case, an informal observation, of 20 minutes, should be made.

If the principal does note room for grammatical improvement, he should inform the teacher, along with other staff members, that they will be video taped to identify "model classroom teachers." The teacher should be video taped twice, the first one scheduled and the second one unscheduled. After the teacher has been video-taped and the principal has viewed the tape with the teacher, providing an opportunity for feedback and discussion, he may take one or several of the following approaches to correction:

1. "Grammar expert:" The principal could explain that he has observed that there was room for improvement in not only the teacher's grammar, but other staff members as well. He should advise her that he wants to name her the "grammar expert" for the school. The duties of the "grammar expert" would include attending workshops and conferences on grammar and language usage and disseminating the information to the faculty in the form of staff development.

2. "Peer preparation:" The principal could identify an area in which the teacher is strong and pair her with someone who is strong in grammar. This could possibly accomplish two goals simultaneously. The "peer coaches" would agree to meet 2 or 3 times weekly to discuss strategies for improvement in their given areas, and to assess the progress the each person has made. According to Baker and Showers, teachers who shared aspects of teaching, planned together, and pooled their experiences--practiced new skills and strategies more frequently and applied them more appropriately than did their counterparts who worked alone to expand their repertoires. Members of peer-coaching groups exhibited greater long-term retention of new strategies and more appropriate use of new teaching models over time.

3. "Toast the teacher:" The principal could recommend that the teacher become active in *Toastmasters*. This would present a win/win situation in which the teacher could develop public speaking skills, as well as improve upon her oral and written grammar. Toastmasters would help to create a higher degree of confidence and thinking, allowing the teacher to internally process what she says first.

4. "Reading readiness:" The principal could advise the teacher that there are materials on hand to facilitate in the improvement of grammar and speaking. He may even suggest that the teacher retain a copy of the book, Talking about People: A Guide to Fair and Accurate Language, by Rosalie Maggio. This book provides information about the use of 8,000 terms; enough information is provided to allow readers to make their own informed judgments.

5. "Media manipulators:" As suggested by the article entitled **" What part of speech is O.J. Simpson?: Teaching grammar and style through the news,"** the principal could encourage the teacher to teach students using practical media strategies such as the evening news, magazines, and the newspaper. This would benefit both the students and the teacher. The students would be educated through mediums other than textbooks and the teacher would have constant contact with correctly worded information.

6. "Time Keepers:" Teachers often complain about being " strongly encouraged" to take staff development courses in addition to their duties as educators. Given this fact, the principal could provide the teacher with one of the following options to attend courses being offered in grammar: *freed up time*-- using teaching assistants, college interns, parents, and administrators to cover classes; *restructured or rescheduled time*-- lengthening school day on four days, with early release on day five; *better-used time*-- using regular staff or district meetings for planning and professional growth rather than for informational or administrative purposes; *common time*-- scheduling common planning periods for colleagues having similar assignments; or *purchased time*-- establishing a substitute bank of 30-40 days per year, which teachers can tap when they participate in committee work or professional development activities.

7. "Climbing the ladder:" The grammatical errors that the teacher is making may very well be correctable just by bringing the problem to her attention. According to an article in the English Journal, many teachers think, "Grammar isn't really that important; literature and current writings are what's truly significant." However, the article states that the best motivation comes as students begin to realize that in the world of work, as well as in social settings, correct grammar and speech are the standard and the necessities. Perhaps the teacher is aspiring to do work beyond the classroom. The principal could impress upon her how poor grammar can prove detrimental to those aspirations and allow the teacher the opportunity to seek the tools necessary for improvement. Though this strategy would be making the teacher aware of the situation, it would empower her to handle in a manner which was comfortable to her.

8. " Sight -based management:" After viewing the tape together, the principal could identify and list other staff members whom he felt were excellent manipulators of the English language. Again, empowerment becomes prevalent, because the teacher decides which three of the teachers listed, she would like to observe over an agreed upon period of time. Seeing the grammar delivered correctly may provide an opportunity for the teacher to see what she is doing incorrectly.

9. "Mentoring:" The principal could assign a mentor to the teacher who was proficient in language usage. Providing someone who is non threatening that the teacher may look up to may create a nurturing and comforting environment in which the teacher may more rapidly improve upon her grammar.

10. "Brass tacks:" Some administrators may feel more comfortable getting to the heart of a problem allowing more time for correction. Additionally, many teachers and employees appreciate tact and honesty. The principal could simply sit down with the teacher, make her aware of the problem noted in the observation, give the teacher a time-frame to correct the problem, and advise the teacher that she may use any avenue necessary to correct the problem within that period of time. Though time constraints may be placed upon the teacher, she should not feel pressured to use any particular method or strategy. The goal is to simply get the job done. Once the time has been exhausted, the principal should follow-up with a second meeting to discuss progress. If the problem has been corrected, it should be noted both verbally and written. However, if the problem persists, the principal should then prompt the teacher to use one or more of the above suggested strategies.

References

Abdal-Haqq, Ismat. (1996). Making time for teacher professional development. (ERIC Clearinghouse on teaching and teacher education, digest # 95-4).

Barry, Tarshis. (1998). Grammar for smart people. Saturday Evening Post, 42-43.

Brown, Alvin. (1996). Correct grammar so essential to effective writing can be taught--really! English Journal, 85, 98-101.

Kane, Sharon. (1996). What part of speech is O.J. Simpson?: Teaching grammar and style through the news. English Journal, 85, 88-90.

Quinn, Mary Ellen. (1998). Talking about people: A guide to fair and accurate language. Booklist, 94, 1171.

Showers,Beverly & Joyce, Bruce. (1996). The evolution of peer coaching. Educational Leadership, 53, 12-16.

I would like to thank the following for their insight and knowledge:

Carolyn Anthony, Language Arts Coordinator, DeKalb County Schools
Dr. William Hammonds, Reading Coordinator, DeKalb County Schools
Kim A. Hill, Human Resources, Koque, Inc.
Walter A. Simpson, Human Resources, PRIDE Rehabilitation.
Jacqueline C. Simpson, Media Information Specialist, Pinellas County Schools